DOMESTIC VIOLENCE
Action Plan

All persons in Nova Scotia should live free from domestic violence and abuse

NOVA SCOTIA

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Introduction

All persons in Nova Scotia should live free from domestic violence and abuse.

Unfortunately, that is not true for too many Nova Scotians. The government has been working on the issue of domestic violence for many years, but we have more to do. Domestic violence is a complex problem. We need a coordinated and sustained effort. This plan creates a coordinated and sustained effort to address one of society's long-standing and pervasive problems. All persons in Nova Scotia should live free from domestic violence and abuse—in their homes, in their families, and in their intimate relationships.

In 2008, the Minister of Justice of the day responded to concerns about domestic violence by directing a committee to seek out ways to strengthen our efforts in this area. The Domestic Violence Prevention Committee, made up of community and government members, released its report in June 2009, which included 70 recommendations. That September, in our Throne Speech, we announced we would respond to the report and its recommendations.

Our response is outlined in this action plan.

What is domestic violence?

Domestic violence is harmful behaviour that happens in our homes, in our families, and in our intimate relationships. It is harmful behaviour that should not happen.

> "Domestic violence is deliberate and purposeful violence, abuse, and intimidation perpetrated by one person against another in an intimate relationship. It occurs between two persons where one exercises power over the other, causing fear, physical, and/or psychological harm. It may be a single act or a series of acts forming a pattern of abuse. Domestic violence can occur in any relationship, however, women are primarily the victims and men are primarily the perpetrators. Children and young people may experience harm by being exposed to violence in adult relationships, being the direct victims of violence, or a combination of the two."
>
> (*Domestic Violence Prevention Committee Report, 2009*)

Domestic violence is also commonly called relationship/dating violence, intimate partner violence, and gender-based violence. It happens in both heterosexual and same-sex relationships. It can affect transgender and intersex populations as well.

What we know from research

Domestic violence affects everyone. Many issues, including culture, race, ethnicity, age, gender identity, (dis)ability, sexual orientation, income and social status, and an individual's own childhood experience of victimization intersect and converge with gender to create challenges, inequities, and vulnerability. For example, aboriginal women in Canada experience domestic violence more often and more severely than non-aboriginal women.

While research shows that similar proportions of women and men report experiencing domestic violence, the extent and severity of violence that women experience is greater. For example, while men are more likely to be killed by a stranger, women are more likely to be killed by an intimate partner—45 times more likely.

Research also shows that most victims of domestic violence do not report the violence to a formal agency. Only one in four Nova Scotian women who experience spousal violence reported it to police. Only one in three women reported it to a service-providing agency.

Why we need an action plan

Domestic violence affects the well-being of individuals, families, children, and communities. The economic costs are great for victims, their families, children, and for society as a whole. The links are well-established between domestic violence and physical and mental health, homelessness, psychiatric hospitalizations (for women), and incarceration (for men).

Currently, the government responds in a number of areas to prevent and address domestic violence through programs in multiple departments and agencies. We understand there is no singular approach to combatting it. This plan approaches this complex issue from a more corporate perspective. It focuses on safety and interventions to deal with the present day-to-day safety of Nova Scotians. It also has a sustained focus on addressing the underlying factors that lead to domestic violence. This longer-term planning will help us realize our vision of all persons in Nova Scotia living free from domestic violence and abuse.

What is included in our action plan

This action plan fulfills our commitment to respond to recommendations made by the Domestic Violence Prevention Committee. The committee's vision was that "all persons in Nova Scotia live free from domestic violence and abuse." We endorse that vision and will work to make it a reality through collaboration, coordination, inclusion, and evidence-based decision making as outlined in this plan.

This action plan

- **identifies existing government programs** and services that support recommendations in the Domestic Violence Prevention Committee report, including
  - programs aimed at preventing and reducing domestic violence
  - services for persons experiencing violence
  - education and training
  - criminal justice responses
  - interventions for those who commit abuse

- **shows how government will work smarter** to sustain our focus on addressing domestic violence through
  - ongoing collection of first-hand experiences
  - facilitated community-government networking sessions - on domestic violence
  - research and evaluation partnership on domestic violence
  - training partnership on domestic violence
  - continuous operational evaluation, monitoring, and improvement of legislation, policies, tools, programs, and services

- **outlines new actions** government will take in 10 broad areas:
  - Launch campaigns to build awareness and help people address domestic violence.
  - Make it easier for victims to navigate and access services.
  - Launch a Domestic Violence Court Program Pilot.
  - Introduce legislative changes to better support victims.
  - Help service providers respond to victim needs more effectively.
  - Improve supports for at-risk families and children.
  - Improve supports for those who commit abuse.
  - Undertake research to build Nova Scotia's knowledge base.
  - Improve education and training opportunities.
  - Undertake program assessments to enhance supports.

The action plan is designed to support sustained change. It is supported by current and new investments to strengthen government, community, and individual capacity to reduce domestic violence in the long term. Some work in this plan is new, some is currently underway, and other work has been refocused or rounded out to address a particular gap.

In addition to a specific action plan focused on domestic violence, this complex issue is also being considered as part of other government work:

- Poverty Reduction Strategy
- Child and Youth Strategy
- Crime Prevention and Reduction Strategy
- Elder Abuse Strategy
- Injury Prevention Strategy
- Alcohol Strategy

Who worked on this action plan?

A Deputy Ministers' Leadership Committee on Family and Intimate Partner Violence oversaw the work on this plan, which included a diverse group of policy and program staff from Community Services, Education, Health, Health Promotion and Protection, Justice, Aboriginal Affairs, Acadian Affairs, African Nova Scotian Affairs, the Disabled Persons Commission, the Human Rights Commission, Immigration, Labour and Workforce Development, the Nova Scotia Advisory Council on the Status of Women, Service Nova Scotia and Municipal Relations, Seniors, and the Public Prosecution Service. The Department of Justice coordinated the work of the committee.

ACTION PLAN

Goals of the Domestic Violence Action Plan

The Domestic Violence Action Plan is a comprehensive set of actions developed with the co-operation of 16 government entities with the following shared goals:

- Make the safety of women and children a priority in government policies and programs.
- Build service capacity to target the needs of those affected by domestic violence, including responding to inequities that affect the health and well-being of marginalized populations.
- Increase access to programs and services for victims.
- Strengthen case processing, coordination, and management for victims.
- Strengthen case processing, coordination, and management to hold those who commit abuse accountable and to support their rehabilitation.
- Strengthen knowledge, skills, and connections between people who are helping to prevent and address domestic violence.
- Focus on planning and policies that build supportive environments (social, political, and economic) to help prevent intimate partner violence from happening in the first place.

1 Current programs

What government is doing now to address domestic violence

The provincial government currently supports a wide range of policies, programs, and services that deal with parts of various recommendations outlined in the Domestic Violence Prevention Committee report. Some of this work was started in 1995 based on the Framework for Action Against Domestic Violence and an external review of that framework known as the 2001 Russell Report.

Below are examples of recommended areas of focus in the Domestic Violence Prevention Committee report, followed by actions already underway. These actions are in addition to a wide range of legislation, policies, programs, and services currently in place to address domestic violence. For a more complete list, go to the listing of current programs on page 15.

Current programs aimed at preventing and reducing domestic violence:

- Public school programs that address healthy relationships in the P–12 curriculum and through the Provincial School Code of Conduct
- Policy and programs that support healthy development of children and positive family attachments such as the Enhanced Home Visiting Program and the Breastfeeding Policy
- Youth Health Centre services that are offered in more than 53 schools across the province

Current services for persons experiencing violence:

- Province-wide Criminal Injuries Counselling Program for victims and children exposed to domestic violence
- Shelter allowances
- HealthLink 811
- Funding to organizations including transition houses, women's centres, and family resource centres
- Family Law Information Centres

Current education and training taking place:

- Ongoing intimate partner violence prevention training delivered to police, early childhood educators, child protection staff, and domestic violence coordinators

Current criminal justice responses in place:

- Domestic Violence Intervention Act
- Pro-arrest, pro-charge, and pro-prosecution directives
- Province-wide intimate partner violence risk assessment by police
- High Risk Case Coordination Protocol Framework
- Domestic violence coordinator positions within police agencies

Current interventions available for those who commit abuse:

- Men's intervention programs
- Respectful relations programs for adults and youth in custody and under community supervision

See **Appendix A** for a complete list of programs and services **currently** in place.

2 Working smarter together
How will government work differently?

The following initiatives solidify a coordinated approach to address domestic violence and will ultimately change the way we work on this issue. They build on principles associated with complex problem solving. They realign and refocus work already being done within existing resources. They will help us to continually monitor and adjust what we are doing to better respond to what is happening in Nova Scotia.

Ongoing collection of first-hand experiences

To improve how we address domestic violence, we need to build on services that work well in Nova Scotia and elsewhere. We need to develop frameworks for evaluation by working with those who provide services and those who both need and use them. This initiative will gather experiences from people involved with or affected by domestic violence on an ongoing basis, including people subjected to abuse, people who commit the abuse, service providers, and friends and family members. Multiple perspectives will be collected and analysed as a continuous feedback loop so that appropriate action can continue to be taken.

Facilitate community-government networking sessions on domestic violence

A key way to work smarter is to promote collaborative partnerships among government agencies, government departments, and community-based agencies with expertise in domestic violence prevention and intervention. To support these partnerships, government will co-facilitate regular networking sessions to share expertise and knowledge and work collaboratively to respond to problems and opportunities as they arise.

Create a research and evaluation partnership on domestic violence

We need ongoing research and evaluation. This partnership will draw on a wide range of expertise, including working with universities and foundations. A coordinated approach will leverage resources, reduce duplication, and standardize processes where appropriate. It will first focus on setting priorities for specific recommendations about research and evaluation in the DVPC report.

Create a training partnership on domestic violence

Training is an ongoing need when dealing with a complex social problem. This government partnership will formalize a coordinated approach to training for partners to make sure resources are put to best use and that consistent materials are available.

Conduct continuous operational evaluation, monitoring, and improvement of legislation, policies, tools, programs, and services

We will adopt a proactive approach to address domestic violence by making best use of committees and mechanisms in place to identify and respond to operational issues including evaluating programs and services and making adjustments as necessary. This will let us more effectively build on the significant investments already made to address domestic violence. Work will include tracking real-time data, analysing responses, acting on opportunities and gaps identified, and offering chances for collaboration.

3 New actions to address domestic violence

Introduce new initiatives focused on victims, perpetrators, at-risk families, youth, community, and workers

The government is launching a range of new actions, based on evidence and knowledge, including recommendations identified in the Domestic Violence Prevention Committee report.

Launch campaigns to build awareness and help people address domestic violence

- Launch a Family Violence in the Workplace initiative to promote awareness about family violence to employees. It will also help employers offer resource and referral information to employees affected by family violence.
- Pilot a Neighbours, Friends, and Family campaign that gives people information and strategies to help prevent woman abuse. The campaign will include a variety of awareness and educational activities and will be tested in three communities (urban, aboriginal, and rural). The campaign builds on work underway in Ontario, where materials are available in multiple languages, and includes a culturally distinct campaign for aboriginal communities.
- Develop a communications strategy to make sure Nova Scotians know about existing services and how to access them.

Make it easier for victims to navigate and access services

- Launch a domestic violence electronic clearinghouse that will serve as a central repository of information on the wide range of programs and services available, including asset mapping to identify and promote services available to victims throughout the province. Language as well as visual impairment issues will be considered.

- Translate information into multiple languages to make sure legal information on rights and responsibilities specific to family violence matters is available to immigrants in languages other than English or French.
- Develop a consistent set of safety planning resources for victims. Resources will also be made available online.
- Make Department of Justice/Community Services surplus cell phones available to victims to reduce isolation.
- Promote the use of HealthLink 811. This telephone service is available 24/7 and includes access to language interpretation services.
- Promote the recently expanded provincial helpline. The telephone number is 421-1188 in the Halifax area and 1 (877) 521-1188 (a toll-free number) throughout the rest of the province.
- Support case conferences as part of the High Risk Case Coordination Protocol Framework for high-risk cases involving children.

Launch a Domestic Violence Court Program Pilot

This action plan will launch Nova Scotia's first Domestic Violence Court Program. We will pilot our model in Sydney and work with stakeholders to design an effective program that will

- offer early and appropriate interventions to increase victim safety, hold offenders accountable, and reduce or deter abusive behaviour
- encourage agencies to work together to address the complex issue of intimate partner violence and offer chances for lasting change
- let us work with partners to make sure programs and services of a Domestic Violence Court Program Pilot are culturally appropriate and relevant

Introduce legislative changes to better support victims

- Amend the Residential Tenancies Act to let a tenant sever their financial obligations under a lease if it is not safe for them to stay in their home because of the risks from domestic violence.
- Amend the Police Act to let police share victim information with Victim Services.
- Amend legislation about custody and access in family court matters. Amendments will be modelled on Manitoba's Protection from Domestic Violence and the Best Interest of the Children's Act. This act makes courts consider issues of domestic violence before releasing contact information about a person and has the court consider whether a parent has at any time committed domestic violence.

Help service providers respond to victim needs more effectively

- Design and share a provincial policy and accompanying guidelines for health care providers that will help them to identify, assess, and intervene appropriately in domestic violence cases. The policy and guidelines will be tailored to integrate health equity and culturally specific approaches.
- Set up a formal process and plans for joint case conferencing between government and community service providers. This would come together when a victim is moving away from an abusive relationship and needs services in many areas such as employment supports, income assistance, housing, and health.
- Work with the Public Prosecution Service to develop some common language for conditions in cases where domestic violence and custody and access issues coincide.
- Work with justice partner agencies and departments to make sure that appropriate policies and practices are in place to enforce the laws and meet provincial guidelines.
- Distribute safety planning resources to service providers, including educational material to help health care workers screen and refer persons affected by domestic violence.
- Develop and test a pilot social equity lens to check whether service providers are integrating health equity and culturally specific approaches into programs and services offered.
- Make sure departments meet French-language services requirements, including providing services in French where appropriate and translating material on services available for victims and perpetrators of domestic violence. Once translated, make sure the French information is distributed to community agencies.

Improve supports for at-risk families and children

- Pilot the "Caring Dads" program to increase the parental capacity of fathers.
- Pilot a Parenting Program for High Risk Families that is responsive to the needs of vulnerable and high-risk populations, including men, women, and youth in the criminal justice system. Set up links with community agencies to ensure continuity of programming and support for this population in communities throughout Nova Scotia.
- Offer chances to counsel children exposed to domestic violence through SchoolsPlus.
- Provide support and mentoring for at-risk male youth and children by enhancing services in family resource centres, youth centres, and "A Place to Belong" program.

Improve supports for those who commit abuse

- Enhance services offered through the men's intervention programs, including standardizing services delivered across six organizations.

Undertake research to build Nova Scotia's knowledge base

- Start a biannual Intimate Partner Violence Tracking Project. This project, unique in Canada, tracks cases of intimate partner violence through the criminal justice system.
- Conduct annual public opinion polls on attitudes about domestic violence. This will allow government to measure changes in public opinion as a result of actions taken to respond to domestic violence. This information will also be relevant for ongoing public awareness strategies.
- Produce an annual statistical report on the nature and extent of domestic violence in Nova Scotia.
- Host domestic violence workshops.

Improve education and training opportunities

- Work with Dalhousie University to incorporate domestic violence education and training in the curriculum of medical students as well as students in other allied health professions.
- Review early childhood development curriculum and incorporate more information about domestic violence if needed.
- Consult with key stakeholders about training needs. Make sure materials and information are accessible to diverse groups, including African Nova Scotians, aboriginals, Acadians, immigrants, and refugees. Annual training efforts will target police, health professionals, front-line staff working with children, and community agencies.
- Work with diverse offices and a targeted group of service providers to develop and test training materials tailored to integrate health equity and culturally specific approaches.

Undertake program assessments

- Explore how supervised access and exchange can be enhanced and delivered in community-based agencies.
- Check security and energy efficiency of existing buildings (e.g., transition houses and second-stage housing) throughout the province. Explore funding available through the Shelter Enhancement Grants as a way to address maintenance and energy efficiency issues of transition houses and second-stage housing.
- Explore options to provide second-stage housing for aboriginal women, particularly in light of the housing shortages in many Nova Scotia First Nation communities.

EVALUATION

Are we making a difference?

We will monitor and track progress on our efforts to address domestic violence in three ways:

Assign evaluation responsibilities

For actions identified in this plan, lead departments will make sure that evaluation plans are in place to effectively measure whether anticipated results from proposed actions are being achieved. The Research and Evaluation Partnership will coordinate and report on this work.

Evaluate indicators of success

We will evaluate the overall success of this action plan by measuring the following indicators of success:

- Increased safety
- Accessible and culturally specific programs and services
- Improved case processing and management
- Increased accountability by perpetrators
- Increased participation in rehabilitation programming
- Enhanced knowledge, skills, and networking by those helping to address domestic violence
- Policies that build supportive environments (social, political, and economic) that help to prevent intimate partner violence from happening in the first place
- Ongoing input from those affected by domestic violence collected, analysed, and used to inform discussions and decisions
- Enhanced coordination, collaboration, and community outreach through facilitated community-government network sessions
- Coordinated research and evaluation initiatives with results shared
- Coordinated training initiatives that meet needs
- Continuous monitoring and responsiveness to issues identified

Track long-term outcomes through an annual statistical profile

We will track the following long-term outcomes to inform continued action in this area:

- Nature, prevalence, and frequency of domestic violence in Nova Scotia generally as well as among diverse communities
- Changing attitudes, behaviours, and norms associated with intimate partner violence through public opinion research
- Key risk and protective factors identified through research on primary prevention

Conclusion

All persons in Nova Scotia should live free from domestic violence and abuse. That we can all agree on. After a comprehensive review of the many aspects of this pervasive and complex problem, we have set out a cohesive action plan. This is a plan that

- communicates what services are available and how to access them
- identifies ways to work smarter so that even more targeted efforts will be put in place to address needs
- makes sure smart investments are being made where they will have the most benefit

Our action plan also creates opportunities for ongoing dialogue and networking between government and community groups. Working together, we can improve the programs and services for those affected by domestic violence.

Appendix A

Listing of current government initiatives to address domestic violence

- *Domestic Violence Intervention Act:* lets victims apply for a 30-day emergency protection order; in force since April 2003, it serves to prevent domestic violence from continuing
- *The Children and Family Services Act*: section 22 (2) states "A child is in need of protective services where ... (I) the child has suffered physical or emotional harm caused by being exposed to repeated domestic violence by or towards a parent or guardian of the child, and the child's parent or guardian fails or refuses to get services or treatment to remedy or alleviate the violence"
- *Victims' Rights and Services Act: An Act to Provide Rights and Services to Victims of Crime*: outlines rights and sets up a Victims' Assistance Fund
- *Maintenance and Custody Act: An Act Respecting the Maintenance of Spouses, Common-law Partners and Dependants*
- *Maintenance Enforcement Act: An Act to Provide for the Enforcement of Payments Under Maintenance Orders*
- *Employment Support and Income Assistance Act*: helps people move toward independence and self-sufficiency
- *Adult Protection Act*: The Department of Health offers help and support for people age 16 or older who are abused or neglected and who cannot physically or mentally protect or care for themselves. This work is guided by the Adult Protection Act (1985). This Act is currently under review
- *Protection of Persons in Care Act*: This Act is an extra safe guard for patients and residents 16 years of age and older who are receiving care from Nova Scotia's hospitals, residential care facilities, nursing homes, homes for the aged or disabled persons under the Homes for Special Care Act, or group homes or residential centres under the Children and Family Services Act. Under this Act, abuse may be physical, psychological, emotional, sexual, neglect, theft or medical abuse. It requires health facility administrators and service providers (includes staff and volunteers) to promptly report all allegations or instances of abuse
- *Involuntary Psychiatric Treatment Act*: provides a mechanism to have an individual, who may be perpetrating domestic violence as a result of a potential mental illness, apprehended by police and taken to a local emergency department for a psychiatric assessment

Policies, programs, and services • Criminal justice-related

- *Dominant aggressor policies for police agencies:* only the more serious aggressor will be charged in incidents where both parties may have assaulted each other
- *Pro-arrest, pro-charge policies for police*: making arrests where there are reasonable and probable grounds to believe an offence has taken place
- *Pro-prosecution directive*: prosecutors must pursue charges involving spousal/partner violence whenever there is a good chance of conviction and prosecution is in the public interest
- *High Risk Case Coordination Protocol Framework*: primary service providers actively making referrals and sharing information in high-risk spousal/intimate partner violence cases
- *Police Pocket Guide*: includes easy-to-find information on assessing risks, applying for an emergency protection order, laying a charge, protecting children in need, dealing with firearms, following up with victims communicating with other responders, and guidelines for law enforcement
- *Domestic Violence Police Case Coordinator Program*: funding to support police-based case coordinators who work with other primary service providers on cases identified as high risk for lethality
- *Ontario Domestic Assault Risk Assessment (ODARA) tool*: a tool to assess risk used by police and other criminal justice stakeholders to assess risk in intimate partner violence issues with the results used to manage and coordinate cases; Nova Scotia started using this tool in 2008
- *Danger Assessment Tool*: a tool to assess risk for lethality used by staff working in victim services, child welfare, men's intervention, and transition houses
- *Public Prosecution Services' Early Case Resolution Pilot project (Halifax)*: offers a chance to include the victim's input into release conditions in domestic violence cases (not high risk) eligible for early resolution
- *Mi'kmaw Legal Support Network*: funding to support the Mi'kmaw Legal Support Network, which offers a range of legal services to aboriginal people
- *Programs for adults and youth in custody and under community supervision*: help with rehabilitation and reintegration, including education on substance abuse, anger management, life skills, respectful relationships, and gender-specific issues; some programs delivered in partnership with non-governmental agencies
- *Respectful Relationships*: designed to help men understand what domestic violence is, how they have been using abusive behaviour, and how to cope with anger or other situations in the past that have escalated to violence

Policies, programs, and services • Supports for persons subjected to violence

- *Helpline*: a provincial telephone support and referral service with staff and volunteers taking calls between 8 am and 11 pm to give non-clinical support and connect callers with the services that can best help them (the nature of the calls varies considerably, but is often about parenting, domestic violence, loneliness and isolation, addictions, mental healthissues, and food and housing concerns); operated by Feed Nova Scotia and funded in part by the province's Child and Youth Strategy Service. Helpline aims to operate as a 24-hour service in 2011.
- *HealthLink 811*: a 24/7 service available across the province that lets callers speak with a registered nurse
- *Senior Abuse Line*: offers information, support, and referrals to anyone concerned about or interested in senior abuse; note that this toll-free number, 1 (877) 833-3377, is not a crisis or emergency line
- *Emergency protection orders*: let victims apply for 30-day emergency protection order; the legislation aims to prevent domestic violence from continuing
- *Transition Houses*: provide 24-hour emergency crisis and transitional services to women and their children experiencing violence and abuse
- *Women's Centres*: provide women and adolescent girls information, services, programs, support, and advocacy, including violence prevention and intervention
- *Family Resource Centres*: provide community-based programs and services that support the healthy development and well-being of children and youth by strengthening families and communities
- *Native Social Counselling Agency*: helps aboriginal people who live off-reserve and are facing social problems and conditions, including domestic violence, with confidential supports and referral services; the Native Social Counselling agency also runs the Welkaqnik Next Step Shelter, which gives survivors of family violence safe, affordable shelter for up to one year
- *Seniors' Safety Programs*: promotes education and awareness about crime prevention, senior abuse, and health and safety issues, and works to enhance communication between seniors and police; some programs offer information and referral services, educational sessions, and direct contact with seniors, often through in-home visits by Seniors' Safety Coordinators (consult the Department of Seniors' publication Programs for Positive Aging or visit www.gov.ns.ca/seniors to find information on specific programs)
- *District Health Authority (DHA/IWK) Mental Health Services*: provide interventions for those who have experienced a mental health problem as a result of domestic violence
- *Shared Care*: a collaborative practice model based on placing a mental health clinician in a primary care practice; in the Capital District Health Authority, there is one shared care initiative underway involving a mental health nurse who provides limited onsite coverage of local shelters

- *Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner (SANE) program*: through this initiative, on-call Sexual Assault Nurse Examiners offer immediate care and conduct forensic examinations of sexual assault victims; a partnership of the Avalon Sexual Assault Centre and the IWK Health Centre. These examinations can take place in the four Emergency Departments located in the Capital District Health Authority (CDHA) — a second SANE program is available in the Guysborough Antigonish Strait Health Authority (GASHA) through a partnership with The Antigonish Woman's Resource Centre
- *Making Changes: A Book for Women in Abusive Relationships*: a publication for women who are or have been abused; produced by the Nova Scotia Advisory Council for the Status of Women and now in its 6th edition (and constantly being updated)
- *Priority intake response by child protection for families experiencing violence*
- *Enhanced shelter allowance*: an enhanced shelter allowance for Employment Support and Income Assistance (ESIA) applicants/recipients fleeing an abusive situation; this shelter allowance is given until the issues related to the abuse are addressed (e.g., court processes and counselling)
- *Waiver of requirement to pursue maintenance income support*: ESIA program rules are waived so that an applicant/recipient who is experiencing domestic violence does not have to pursue maintenance income support when the individual's spouse/parent of the child poses serious threat to the applicant/recipient and/or other family members
- *Special needs benefits*: the ESIA program offers items or services for special needs to applicants/recipients and/or the spouse of an applicant/recipient when the applicant/recipient shows they have exhausted all possibilities from all resources for full or partial coverage of the cost of the special needs item or service; examples include covering the cost of the Domestic Violence Emergency Response System and damage deposits for new accommodations
- *Relocation out of region/province for eligible clients*: available through Employment Support and Income Assistance when there is a confirmed report of family violence
- *Confidential Services for Victims of Abuse (CSVA)*: a joint federal/provincial/territorial initiative that offers help in establishing a new identity and location for Canadians who are victims of intimate or family violence and are at risk of serious injury or fatal harm when all other safety measures have been considered
- *Top placement priority in rental units*: Nova Scotia's seven housing authorities put victims of family violence at the top of all waiting lists for affordable rental units (normally housing authorities put approved applicants on public housing wait lists and applicants are then placed in housing in chronological order; victims of family violence override the wait lists and are given top priority for the affordable rental units that become available, including units in public housing projects or rent-supplement units in private apartments or non-profit housing projects)
- *Child Care Subsidy Program*: gives highest priority for children at risk for violence in the home and makes sure there is a subsidy at a licensed child-care facility or family home day care

- *Family Law Information Centres*: help families in conflict by offering a range of services dealing with family law issues
- *Provincial victim services programming*: includes help preparing victim impact statements, support for vulnerable witnesses, criminal injuries counselling, safety planning, and referrals to safety and support services
- *Criminal Injuries Counselling for Children Exposed to Domestic Violence*: funding for counselling for children exposed to domestic violence
- *Victim Information Program*: lets the victim know if the offender has been released from custody
- *Men's Intervention Programs*: programs and services for men who have been abusive in intimate partner relationships
- *District Health Authority (DHA) Addiction Services*: a range of services from prevention to inpatient treatment (individual, family, and group therapy, support, and crisis intervention) within the community; this work is often done with community organizations and other government-funded health organizations
- *Women-specific programming by Addiction Services*: addresses the unique barriers and challenges faced by women in Nova Scotia, including women who are victims of violence or sexual violence who also are affected by the harmful use of alcohol, drugs, or gambling

Policies, programs, and services • "System" support-related

- *Funding for organizations working on family violence prevention and intervention*: these organizations include transition houses, men's intervention programs, Native Social Counselling Agency, Family Service Association of Eastern Nova Scotia, Stepping Stone, Alice Housing, Adsum House, and Avalon Sexual Assault Services (an extra $500,000 was given to transition houses and women's centres to support 18 facilities announced in July 2010)
- *Funding for community-based organizations and programs in frequent contact with victims and/or children who experience and are impacted by domestic violence*: these include
  - *Family Resource Centres*: provide community-based programs and services that support the healthy development and well-being of children and youth by strengthening families and communities.
  - *Family SOS*: provides a number of programs and services directed toward strengthening families including in home family intervention, support services and parent education.
  - *Parenting Journey*: located in communities across Nova Scotia, Parenting Journey provides individualized, family support through home based visitation and some community programming. Parenting Journey supports children, youth and their families holistically by providing support in the following areas: child/youth, parent(s), family and community.
  - *Phoenix Housing*: offers safe, supportive housing for youth learning skills for independent living.

- *Boys and Girls Clubs of Canada*: often responding to negative behaviour by children who are now experiencing or have experienced domestic violence, the clubs play a significant role in strengthening children through recreation and help them to build positive relationships with adults so that they may grow into stronger adults who will develop positive relationships
- *Big Brothers Big Sisters of Canada*: works with children on an individual basis and has a strong mentoring component
- *Ward 5 Community Centre*: delivers services to a wide range of clients and serves to respond to as well as prevent domestic violence through its programming
- *Phoenix Youth Programs*: offer a variety of shelter services for youth, some of whom are fleeing homes where there is domestic violence
- *Halifax Information and Referral Information*: a reading enhancement program aimed at residents of north end Halifax and Spryfield that offers information and exposure to positive adult role models
- *A Place to Belong*: offers after-school programming in areas with socioeconomic challenges, with a focus on building skills and relationships and often delivered by pre-existing community-based agencies with strong ties in the community
- *Veith House*: a neighbourhood house whose challenge is to meet the needs of children, individuals and families. Veith House works primarily with people living in poverty, with empowerment as an ever present goal.
- *Kids Help Phone*: provides immediate, bilingual, professional counselling to children and youth 24-hours a day

- *ESIA Family Violence and Abuse Protocols*: increase ESIA caseworkers' and staff's awareness of the three types of violence/abusive situations (spousal/intimate partner violence, child abuse and neglect, and adult abuse and neglect) and identify their responsibilities if a client or other person is known or suspected to have experienced/be at risk of experiencing violence or abuse; they can only respond to observed violence/abuse by offering immediate financial support (if needed) and information on services available for further support (revised and updated online in May 2010 [at the end of each protocol there is a list of online links to legislative and helpful information on each kind of violence/abuse])
- *Formal written protocols developed by child welfare agencies and their district offices along with transition houses for victims of family violence and treatment programs for abusive men*: the protocols are reviewed every three years and set up a mutual understanding of roles with and responsibilities to children exposed to domestic violence; regular regional meetings have been set up to make sure there is a consistent approach in the region in responding to victims of violence through communication, collaboration, and team work
- *Housing Authority Placement Policy*: housing authority gives victims of family violence priority access to housing

- *A Cultural Competence Guide for Primary Health Care Professionals in Nova Scotia*: an online resource that includes tools and resources to help primary health care professionals offer culturally competent health care. http://healthteamnovascotia.ca/cultural_competence/Cultural_Competence_guide_for_Primary_Health_Care_Professionals.pdf
- Cultural competence guidelines for primary health care are available at: http://healthteamnovascotia.ca/cultural_competence/CulturalCompetence Guidelines_Summer08.pdf
- *Health Literacy and Cultural Competence Guide*: This resource is intended for health care and health promotion professionals and community partners who create, assess, and /or adapt health materials, forms, and signage to help them ensure that materials are clear and understandable; are appropriate and responsive; and reflect the culture, language and health literacy levels of the people we serve. http://www.gov.ns.ca/health/primaryhealthcare/healthLiteracy.asp
- *Nova Scotia Prenatal Record and Maternal Assessment forms*: pregnant women are asked questions about violence and abuse; the prenatal form is used by most primary care providers in Nova Scotia and the maternal assessment form is used in hospitals as an assessment and documentation tool
- *Shelter Enhancement Program (SEP)*: financial help from the Housing Services division of Community Services for organizations to repair, rehabilitate, and improve existing shelters for women, children, and youth who are victims of family violence; SEP also helps organizations get or build new shelters and expand existing shelters and second-stage housing
- *Research exploring the harmful effects on relationships of alcohol, substance use, and gambling, including physical and emotional violence*: conducted by the Addiction Services division of Health Promotion and Protection
- *Healthy Babies and Healthy Families publication*: lists guidelines on family violence issues
- *Intimate partner violence training*: specialized training to justice partners about domestic violence, including annual domestic violence educators' training
- *Online intimate partner training for Early Intervention Programs (EIP)*: offered through Justice to EIP (a home visiting program for children who experience developmental delays) and child protection staff
- *Community Services staff training on Family Violence and Abuse Protocols*: a mandatory online training module with questions about intimate partner violence, child abuse and neglect, and adult abuse and neglect that will be used to help ESIA caseworkers and staff practise assessing and responding to violence/abuse
- *Community Services staff training on the Reporting and Investigating Allegations of Abuse and Neglect*: A Protocol for Staff Working in Regulated Early Childhood Care Settings and Child Welfare Agencies

- *Early Childhood Education staff training on the Reporting and Investigating Allegations of the Abuse and Neglect Protocol*: used to understand how children who witness violence toward others in the home are affected
- *Modules on family violence in core training for child protection and residential services staff*: includes online training and training specific to responding to domestic violence
- *Family violence response training for foster parents*: used for foster parents who are supporting a child who has experienced past violence
- *Exploration of the systemic barriers to early and brief intervention with alcohol, substance use, and gambling in primary care settings*: the Addiction Services division of Health Promotion and Protection has worked with the health professional schools at Dalhousie University to talk about chances to affect how alcohol use, substance use, and gambling curriculum is developed and delivered

Policies, programs, and services • Prevention-related

- *Public School Programs*: Health Education, Healthy Living, and Family Studies curriculum outcomes teach students from grade primary to grade 12 about healthy family and personal relationships
- *Parkyn Screening Tool*: all new mothers are screened within five to seven days after the birth of their baby; family violence is one of several high-risk indicators on the tool
- *Enhanced Home Visiting Program*: trains home visitors in the Great Kids, Inc. curriculum, which incorporates philosophies, tools, and education to teach parents about healthy relationships, reducing stress, and accessing supports
- *Sexualization Sensing Project*: explores perceptions of and ways to change the sexualized environment. Sexualization helps maintain a climate that supports intimate partner violence
- *Policy and programs that support the healthy development of children and youth*: includes well-child system framework, integrated service delivery model, breastfeeding policy to support positive attachments in families, and carrying out of a comprehensive school health approach
- *Nova Scotia Alcohol Strategy*: to cut down on the harms associated with substance use and/or gambling
- *Nova Scotia Injury Prevention Strategy*: to address the root causes of injury, including those stemming from intimate partner violence
- *Intimate partner and sexual violence and social/economic inequalities in data collection efforts*
- *Public health resources*: contain information about intimate partner violence and healthy relationships, including
  - *Loving Care*, a series of written resources for parents of newborns from birth to one year (the next book, focusing on ages one to three years, will be launched within the next year); part of the series includes a book entitled Parents and Families, which offers information on healthy parenting and healthy relationships

  - *Sex? A Healthy Sexuality Resource*, a publication that talks about healthy relationships, sexual consent, and sexual assault
- *Youth Health Centre Initiative:* Youth Health Centre (YHC) counsellors offer healthy relationship information and support through YHC programs across the province
- *ESIA case management*: ESIA caseworkers proactively address any needs recipients might have (including those related to domestic violence) and offer recipients information and referrals to supporting resources that can further help them
- *Transition Houses, Women's Centres, Family Resource Centres, and Parenting Journey program*: offer prevention programming/supports
- *Crime prevention funding*: for projects aimed at paying for events, activities, and equipment that give young Nova Scotians a chance to take part in community programs; offered to community groups through the Department of Justice
- *Senior Safety Grant*: enhances and expands Senior Safety Programs in Nova Scotia to address the safety concerns of seniors by promoting education and awareness about crime prevention, senior abuse, and safety and health issues, and by enhancing communication between seniors and police; a joint initiative of the departments of Seniors and Justice
- *Senior abuse awareness presentations*: available to interested community groups through the Department of Seniors or local Seniors' Safety Programs

Appendix B

As outlined in this plan, government is moving forward with actions to address the majority of recommendations from the Domestic Violence Prevention Committee report. Our action plan also provides mechanisms to continue to work on the remaining recommendations listed below and taken directly from the report.

- Explore effective evidence-informed, culturally relevant, and strengths-based domestic violence prevention initiatives for public schools.
- Encourage opportunities for gender-specific programming about violence in relationships.
- Review pre-service teacher education programs and in-service training for teachers, guidance counsellors, and other school-based staff to include awareness of domestic violence identification, prevention, and referral.
- Develop and sustain, in collaboration with early childhood educators and others who work with young children, programs and resources aimed at educating young children about healthy relationships.

- Work with Youth Health Centres, Health Promoting School Teams, Mi'kmaq Liaison Office, African Canadian Services, the Nova Scotia School Boards Association, and Police Liaison School Services to support healthy relationship programming and a positive, safe school climate.
- Encourage adult education programs, schools, universities, and other institutions that offer education and training to add training about domestic violence to their curricula.
- Partner with youth (both in and out of school) to develop innovative, youth-centred approaches to domestic violence prevention, dating violence, sexual assault, harassment, and the promotion of healthy relationships.
- Create community-based navigator positions to support victims who are accessing a variety of systems (e.g., employment supports, income assistance, housing, and health) that support their move away from abusive relationships.
- Increase the support for victims who go though the court system to include community-based court advocacy workers to help victims understand and use the legal system.
- Support ongoing initiatives about aboriginal models of restorative justice, First Nation tribunal and specialized court processes (e.g., Gladue), and perpetrator intervention.
- Establish collaborative relationships between police and First Nation service providers so appropriate approaches and protocols are set up for dealing with aboriginal people who experience domestic violence.
- Explore ways that the court system recognizes and responds to an abuser who is continuing the abuse by keeping the victim involved in the court system through perpetual litigation and/or where an abuser will use self-representation with the intent to bully the victim.
- Review how jurisdictional mandates and responsibilities create additional barriers for aboriginal victims seeking services.
- Support holistic models of service delivery, particularly to the aboriginal community.
- Facilitate links between governments (provincial, federal, and First Nation) and aboriginal organizations so that the needs of aboriginal people experiencing domestic violence can be addressed through timely and effective programs and services.
- Support aboriginal and other diverse communities in developing programs that deal with the prevention of domestic violence. Offer this support in a holistic way that is relevant to their culture.
- Explore how a social marketing campaign could be useful in changing attitudes and behaviours, especially in reaching diverse communities about issues of domestic violence.